

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EA-07 AF-06 ARA-06 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-10

DHA-02 ORM-01 PA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

PRS-01 SP-02 USIE-00 AID-05 PM-04 NSC-05 SS-15 SSO-00

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DRAFTED BY IATF:JBROH-KAHN:DJB

APPROVED BY IATF:JVTAFT

EA:JMROSENTHAL

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS IMMEDIATE

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INFORM CONSULS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: PRESS STATEMENT ON SAILING OF VIETNAMESE
REPATRIATE SHIP

1.DEPUTY DIRECTOR INTERAGENCY TASKFORCE FOR INDOCHINA
REFUGEES MADE FOLLOWINGSTATEMENT ON GUAM WHEN SHIP
CARRYING VIETNAMESE REPATRIATES SAILED FROM THERE. POSTS
SHOULD NOT VOLUNTEER STATEMENT BUT MAY DRAW FROM IT TO
RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS WHICH MAY BE RAISED.

BEGIN TEXT:

A. ON SEPTEMBER 30, MRS. JULIA V. TAFT, DIRECTOR OF THE
INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON INDOCHINA REFUGEES, ANNOUNCED
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THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO ACCEDE

TO THE URGENT PLEAS OF SEVERAL HUNDRED REPATRIATES ON GUAM TO BE ENABLED TO RETURN TO VIETNAM ABOARD A VIETNAMESE SHIP ANCHORED AT GUAM. THAT SHIP, THE VIETNAM THUONG TIN I, DEPARTED GUAM TODAY, OCTOBER 16, AT 1247 HOURS GUAM TIME WITH 1,546 PERSONS ABOARD.

B. THE DECISION OF THE REPATRIATES TO RETURN RESTED ENTIRELY WITH THEM. PRIOR TO THEIR EMBARCATION EACH REPATRIATE OR HEAD OF REPATRIATE HOUSEHOLD WAS INTERVIEWED TO CONFIRM HIS DECISION TO RETURN ABOARD THE SHIP. A PETITION WHICH THE REPATRIATES SIGNED IN SEPTEMBER DESCRIBED THEIR FRUSTRATION AT BEING SEPARATED FROM THEIR FAMILIES AS THE MAJOR REASON FOR THEIR ARDENT DESIRE TO RETURN TO VN AND THIS SAME REASON WAS CITED MOST OFTEN DURING THE PRE-BOARDING INTERVIEWS. THE PROCESSING AND DEPARTURE WERE OBSERVED BY THE AMERICAN RED CROSS.

C. IN ACCEDING TO THE REPATRIATES' REQUEST TO LEAVE BY THIS MEANS, THE UNITED STATES HAS TAKEN ALL FEASIBLE STEPS TO ASSURE THE SAFETY OF THEIR VOYAGE. THE U.S. NAVY HAS HELPED PREPARE THE VESSEL FOR SAILING AND HAS PROVISIONED AND FUELED IT FOR THE VOYAGE. AN INSPECTION FOR SEAWORTHINESS WAS PROVIDED BY THE LLOYDS OF LONDON REPRESENTATIVE ON GUAM. A CREW OF FORMER VIETNAMESE MERCHANT MARINE AND NAVY PERSONNEL, ORGANIZED BY THE REPATRIATES, HAS CONDUCTED SHAKEDOWN CRUISES TO FAMILIARIZE ITSELF WITH THE VESSEL AND ASSURE THAT THE SHIP AND CREW ARE UP TO ACCEPTED STANDARDS OF READINESS. THE THUONG TIN HAS BEEN PROVIDED WITH NAVIGATIONAL AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT OF NORMAL MARITIME STANDARDS TO ASSURE THAT THE SHIP CAN REPORT ITS PROGRESS AND REQUEST ASSISTANCE IF NECESSARY. THE UNITED STATES WILL, OF COURSE, ASSIST THE VESSEL AT ANY TIME ASSISTANCE IS REQUESTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDARD MARITIME PRACTICES.

D. SOME REFUGEES IN THE UNITED STATES WHO HAVE REQUESTED REPATRIATION DID NOT ELECT TO RETURN ON THE THUONG TIN I. THE U.S.G. HAS ASKED THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES TO CONTINUE TO ACT ON BEHALF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THIS GROUP AND TO CONTINUE TO ASSIST THEM -- AS WELL AS ANY OTHERS WHO MIGHT IN THE FUTURE DECIDE TO GO BACK- IN RETURNING TO VIETNAM. END TEXT.

2. FYI: ADDITIONAL PRESS GUIDANCE, IF ASKED, FOR FOLLOWING QUESTION WHICH COMES UP QUITE FREQUENTLY.

Q. BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM HAVE CHARGED THAT THE

USG IS VIOLATING THEIR SOVEREIGNTY BY SENDING REFUGEES
ON GUAM BACK BY SHIP. WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THIS?

A. OUR ACTIONS HAD NO OTHER INTENTION OR IMPLICATION
BEYOND THE PURELY HUMANITARIAN ONE OF PROVIDING THE
REPATRIATES THE OPPORTUNITY TO REJOIN THEIR FAMILIES. KISSINGER

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